

**VA****U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

# News Release

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*Washington, D.C.* -- The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced the establishment of eight new community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) in Michigan, Texas and Nevada as part of the agency's ongoing program to improve access to VA health care.

These add to more than 260 other new CBOCs established in the last three years. VA currently operates a total of 551 outpatient clinics and more are in the process of activation.

"Today's announcement reflects our ongoing commitment to assuring consistent and predictable quality, efficiency and improved access to care to more veterans," said VA Secretary Togo D. West Jr.

The popularity of community clinics is shown in part by workload data. While VA inpatient admissions declined by nearly a third since fiscal year 1995 (284,000 fewer admissions in 1998 compared to 1995), the outpatient visit workload has gone up by more than a third, 9.2 million visits, for a total of 35.8 million outpatient visits in fiscal year 1998.

Treating veterans at the most appropriate levels of care is enabling VA to care for far more veterans each year. The total annual number of patients treated rose from 2.9 million to 3.4 million over the past four years.

In addition to a new structure providing for regional coordination of care, VA has reformed its eligibility rules to provide a full continuum of inpatient and outpatient acute care services to veterans who enroll in the VA health-care plan. For this fiscal year VA has determined that appropriations are adequate to accept enrollment by any veteran.

Enrollment for VA services can be accomplished at any time by calling 1-877-222-8387. VA encourages veterans to enroll before they need care. There are limited copayments required of higher-income veterans having no disability connected with their prior military service, but care always is provided at no cost to the veteran needing care for his or her service-connected condition.